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Letter dated 15 June 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Following the Security Council informal consultations this afternoon, I am writing to draw your attention to the attached written Ministerial statement of 15 June 2006 (see annex) by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mrs. Margaret Beckett), which includes the following:

> "At the request of the United Nations Secretary-General, I have therefore agreed that, subject to Parliamentary legislative approval, the United Kingdom would allow former President Taylor, if convicted and should circumstance require, to enter the United Kingdom to serve any sentence imposed by the Court. This is entirely without prejudice to the eventual location or outcome of the trial. Former President Taylor's right to a fair trial must be respected."

I would be grateful if you could circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Emyr **Jones Parry**

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Annex to the letter dated 15 June 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland addressed to the President of the Security Council

Written Ministerial statement on Sierra Leone by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

Since 29 March, former President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, has been in detention at the Special Court for Sierra Leone in Freetown, indicted for crimes against humanity and war crimes allegedly committed during Sierra Leone's brutal civil war.

Regional leaders and the wider international community judge his continued presence there to pose a considerable and immediate threat to regional security. An attempt to free him by force, for example, even if unsuccessful, could jeopardize the fragile security of Sierra Leone, Liberia and neighbouring States.

It is for this reason that regional leaders and the international community have supported the proposal to hold the trial outside the region, as is provided for in the agreement establishing the Court.

The Government of the Netherlands has agreed that it would allow the trial to take place before the Special Court for Sierra Leone sitting in The Hague. If acquitted, former President Taylor would be free to leave the Netherlands. If convicted, he would serve any sentence imposed by the Court.

The Dutch offer is conditional upon a State agreeing now to allow former President Taylor, if convicted and should circumstances require, to serve his sentence in that State. Once that condition is met, the proposal to transfer the trial could be discussed again by the United Nations Security Council, where a draft resolution establishing a legal basis for transfer is already in circulation.

At the request of the United Nations Secretary-General, I have therefore agreed that, subject to parliamentary legislative approval, the United Kingdom would allow former President Taylor, if convicted and should circumstances require, to enter the United Kingdom to serve any sentence imposed by the Court. This is entirely without prejudice to the eventual location or outcome of the trial. Former President Taylor's right to a fair trial must be respected.

Were the Court to acquit former President Taylor, we would not be required to allow him to come to the United Kingdom. Were he to be convicted, and subsequently released after serving a sentence, the expectation at this stage is that former President Taylor would leave or face removal from the United Kingdom.

By offering these assurances, we are removing one potential obstacle to allowing the trial to proceed. We are also demonstrating the absolute determination of the United Kingdom to see the alleged perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes held to account.

The United Kingdom has a strong international reputation as one of the world's leading advocates for international justice. We played a key role in negotiating the establishment of the International Criminal Court as well as the

establishment of other international criminal tribunals relating to the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, as well as the Special Court for Sierra Leone itself.

Agreeing to allow former President Taylor, if convicted and should circumstances require, to serve his sentence in the United Kingdom sends a strong signal of our willingness to combat impunity by assisting in bringing those who bear the greatest responsibility for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide to justice.

Former President Taylor's handover to the Special Court in Freetown was an historic day for the people of Sierra Leone and West Africa. The international community must not fail them by asking them to run the risk associated with his continued presence in Freetown. It is for that reason that we have decided to take this step.

The United Kingdom has been a key player in efforts to support Sierra Leone, Liberia and the wider region, as it seeks to bring an end to the cycle of destruction and violence that it has suffered for so long.

We were also instrumental in bringing peace to Sierra Leone, and have supported Sierra Leone as it has built upon that peace and worked to put the years of war decisively in the past. Our action today will help to close the chapter of conflict by allowing the trial of former President Taylor, which will determine the truth regarding his alleged involvement in Sierra Leone's vicious civil war, to go ahead.